



AUSTIN & TONOPAH RANGER DISTRICTS

**RECREATION AND TOURISM
FRAMEWORK PLAN**

DRAFT

October 2003

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FRAMEWORK PLAN**

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Introduction



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF PLAN

This plan lays a broad framework for the promotion and management of sustainable recreation uses and tourism development within and around the Austin and Tonopah ranger districts of the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Humbolt-Toiyabe National Forest. The plan outlines recommendations for building partnerships and fostering a regional stewardship ethic in order to create high quality visitor experiences, conserve resources and strengthen local economies throughout the planning area.

The USFS cannot implement this plan by itself. Proactive efforts are required to engage the local communities, stimulate private sector development and induce broader plan ownership and participation. Partnerships between the USFS and a host of area stakeholders are crucial and the USFS is committed to working with local communities, partnering agencies, Chambers of Commerce and other potential partners in order to implement this plan. The USFS intends for this planning effort to serve as a catalyst that will engage the Austin and Tonopah ranger districts and its partners in the development of a sustainable tourism economy within the region over the next twenty years.

This plan espouses a concept of economic sustainability, which suggests an evolving balance between short and long term development objectives, and between the needs of the community, the economy and the environment. The objective of sustainable tourism is to ensure that the growth of tourism does not overwhelm the traditional community and economy of the area and does not degrade the region's natural, cultural and historic amenities that constitute the region's primary visitor draws. In this instance, an adherence to concepts of sustainability, means striving for a balance between resources management and conservation and tourism promotion and development.

PLANNING AREA BOUNDARY

The planning area, also referred to as the Austin/Tonopah region, is located in central Nevada and encompasses the Austin and Tonopah ranger districts of the Humbolt-Toiyabe National Forest as well as surrounding BLM land and a number of small towns. Given this broad context, the USFS is committed to adopting a comprehensive planning approach and evaluating how recreation development and management practices will affect local economies and adjacent lands. The towns of Austin and Tonopah serve as major gateways to the USFS ranger districts and are the primary focus of this plan's efforts to spark tourism development and economic revitalization.

The boundaries of the planning area are (*see Southwest Context Map*):

- *North*: Approximately 12 miles north of Highway 50
- *East*: The Town of Eureka
- *South*: Approximately 4 miles south of the Town of Tonopah
- *West*: Highway 361 at Gabbs

PROJECT VISION & GOALS

Shaped by the USFS mission of “caring for the land and serving people,” the vision and goal statements will guide the management of the planning area and articulate the desired nature of the visitor experience.

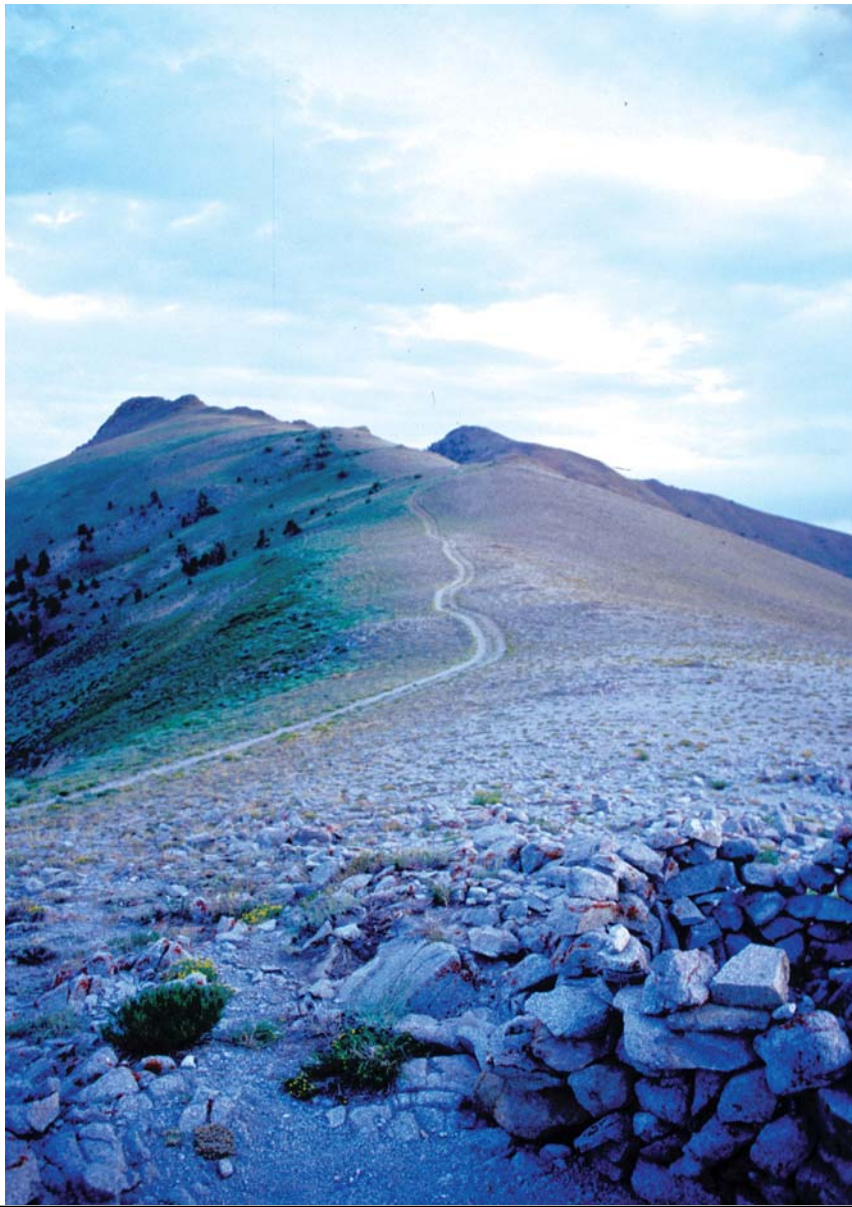
The following vision statement has guided this planning effort:

The Austin and Tonopah ranger districts and surrounding lands promise alpine and desert beauty, diverse recreation opportunities and solitude in the heart of central Nevada. The area beckons visitors in search of rejuvenation and adventure to experience, enjoy and respect this remote landscape. Through investment, partnerships and education, the USFS hopes to inspire appreciation and stewardship for the area’s abundant natural and cultural resources among local residents and visitors. The USFS and its partners will work together to conserve and protect the area’s wildlife, habitats and historic and prehistoric artifacts while promoting responsible tourism.

The following project goals set the framework for achieving the vision:

- ❖ **Partnerships:** Establish partnerships among private and public entities to improve visitor services (e.g. restaurant, accommodations and information centers) to stimulate the development of a sustainable tourism industry that bolsters local economies, promotes the enjoyment and protection of area resources, and advances a land use ethic that embraces stewardship.
- ❖ **Economic Development:** Implement marketing and promotion strategies that lay the groundwork for building a sustainable year-round tourism industry and attracting visitors who will enjoy and respect the area’s special resources. Support the development of diverse visitor services and hospitality within the towns and on the public lands that cater to a broad range of tourists and raise the comfort level of travel within a remote landscape.
- ❖ **Interpretation & Education:** Research and interpret the key stories of the Austin/Tonopah region in order to promote a keener awareness, understanding and appreciation of the area’s natural, historic and cultural resources. Develop a broad and effective system for familiarizing visitors and potential users with the area’s resources and recreation opportunities.
- ❖ **Resource Conservation:** Maintain and enhance the integrity of the area’s natural, cultural and historic resources by protecting sensitive sites, defining specific use areas and fostering a stewardship ethic among visitors and residents.
- ❖ **Recreation Opportunities:** Create recreation opportunities for a variety of user groups that facilitate rejuvenation, relaxation and adventure.
- ❖ **Monitoring:** Develop a system for measuring the effectiveness of marketing efforts and evaluating visitor satisfaction. Also record the effects of tourism development on the area’s resources and local economies.

Understanding the Resource & Tourism Opportunities



CHAPTER 2: Understanding the Resource and Tourism Opportunities

This chapter outlines the Austin/Tonopah region's resources, visitor services, the qualities that make it an attractive place to visit and the issues of concern that pose challenges to the development of a sustainable tourism industry.

THE PLANNING AREA

The planning area encompasses a large section of Nye County and small sections of southern Lander and Eureka Counties all of which are located in south-central Nevada. Over 11 million acres, Nye County is the third largest county in the continental United States. Of this vast land area, only 822,711 acres (or just over seven percent of the total) are private land. In 2000, the county had approximately 35,000 residents. The southeastern portion of Nye County has a number of federal military installations and represents the most populated portion of the County. This plan focuses largely on central Nye County and the area bisected by Highway 376.

The planning area is sparsely populated with only four major population concentrations: Austin (350 residents), Tonopah (2,600), Eureka (1,900) and Round Mountain (800). The local economy is primarily based on resource extraction, government and ranching. The planning area is also very isolated. Reno and Las Vegas, the two largest regional communities are roughly equidistance from the core of the planning area but still over four hours drive time.

Historically, the area has been subject to mining related boom and bust cycles and mining continues to support a large share of the local economy. During the late 1800's and early 1900's this area epitomized the Wild West as silver and gold strikes spurred the sudden growth of numerous local settlements some of which grew to become major communities and others withered to a few dilapidated buildings.

PLACE DEFINITION

This statement is intended to define the essence of the planning area and provide a basis for the development of interpretive themes and marketing materials:

The Austin/Tonopah region includes four vast mountain ranges rising from broad desert valleys in some of the most remote and unspoiled lands of the United States. The area's wildness, spectacular scenery, and wealth of historic and prehistoric artifacts present exceptional opportunities for discovery, challenge, relaxation and solitude. The area's scale and the sense of isolation is unsurpassed anywhere else in the lower 48.

CURRENT TOURISM MARKETS AND SERVICES

State of Nevada

For tourism promotion purposes, Nevada divides the State into five "territories" based on similarity of attractions and landscape. The planning area crosses two promotional territories: the Pioneer and the Pony Express Districts. Austin and Eureka are situated on Highway 50, which is the core stretch of the Pony Express Territory. The great majority of the planning area lies south of Highway 50 in the State's "Pioneer" Territory.

The State positions The Pony Express Territory as:

- “Open range, endless vistas, sagebrush-carpeted valleys, and picturesque mining towns – few places capture the Nevada experience as well as the Pony Express Territory.”

And the Pioneer Territory as:

- “Ghost towns and historic mining towns, where gold and silver fortunes were won and lost during Nevada’s famous era of boom and bust a century ago, dot the wide-open spaces of Nevada’s Pioneer Territory.”

Both areas emphasize recreational opportunities, wildlife, history, isolation and awe inspiring landscapes. The State’s commitment to rural tourism promotion provides an excellent platform for implementation of this plan.

Planning Area Communities

Tonopah

The Town of Tonopah was established at the turn of the Century with the discovery of silver. The City reports 430 hotel rooms, but these facilities largely serve a transient market traveling between Las Vegas and Reno, a small local gaming market and temporary workers at the nearby U.S. Air Force base. Tonopah has a well-regarded outdoor mining museum and like most of the settlements in the area, an engaging but deteriorating collection of historic buildings tied to the town’s mining heritage.

Tonopah is the county seat of Nye County. The town sponsors an annual “Jim Butler Days” event each spring, which celebrates its mining heritage. The community has more recently instituted an annual off road vehicle challenge race.

Austin

The Town of Austin lies approximately 150 miles north of Tonopah but shares a common heritage. In 1862, nearly 50 years before the silver strike in Tonopah, W.H.Talbott discovered silver in the area around Austin and within two years, Austin had over 10,000 residents. The town prospered for many years although periodic fires and floods took their toll on the downtown and residential buildings. By the turn of the 20th Century, the Silver Mines had played out and Austin had diminished to under a thousand residents.

Today, Austin has a population of approximately 350 persons. The town lies just off of Highway 50 and most present day visitors are only stopping briefly for gas, food or supplies as they travel between Salt Lake City and Reno. In recent years, Austin has tried to capitalize on its mountain setting and historic buildings to expand its own tourist trade. The Austin and Smoky Valley Chambers of Commerce have organized a “Mountain Sage” web site to promote the area as a recreation and leisure destination. Austin supports an annual mountain bike race, the “Claim Jumpers Mountain Bike Festival,” and has organized and marketed a series of mountain bike trails around the community. Austin has three restaurants and approximately 40 hotel rooms.

Eureka

The town of Eureka, which is also the Eureka County seat, has a history similar to Austin’s. Like Austin, Eureka owes its origins to early silver mining activity, but Eureka also developed zinc and lead production and developed extensive processing facilities. In the 1870’s, Eureka was home to over 7,000 residents, but the mines played out rapidly and the population quickly fell to a few thousand residents. Today, Eureka also serves as a supply stop for Highway 50 travelers and offers perhaps the best-preserved historic downtown in the planning area. Eureka has three restaurants and about 25 hotel rooms.

Other Communities & Services

The entire planning area contains less than 10,000 residents. The rural sections of the planning area are very sparsely populated, although there are a few small communities in the Smoky Valley including Round

Mountain and Carvers. There are an additional 30-40 rooms along Highway 376 near Round Mountain, Carvers and at isolated bed and breakfast operations in rural County.

Additionally, the USFS offers eleven developed campgrounds within the planning area most of which have restrooms and area accessible by 2-wheel drive vehicles. Additional campgrounds are found on BLM land including the Dickinson Petroglyph Recreation Area. The USFS and BLM campgrounds offer approximately 120-140 camping sites. Informal or primitive camping at undeveloped sites is also a common practice and there are small RV facilities in Austin, Tonopah and Round Mountain.

Tourism Data

Given the informal character of tourism activity within the planning area, tourist data are sparse. The Austin Ranger station, which operates as a visitor center, reports approximately 200 visitors a month along with 650 monthly phone and fax inquiries. Summer is the peak period for personal visits and most visitors are just passing through on a brief stop off the highway. The Tonopah ranger station also welcomes visitors, but does not keep visitor statistics.

Campsites in the planning area are generally uncrowded with the exception of hunting season. Interviews with local Chamber representatives, hotel operators and public land managers support the following general observations:

- Tonopah has a large day visitor population, which is largely associated with its proximity to the main highway between Las Vegas and Reno. The substantial Tonopah accommodation base is primarily associated with Las Vegas to Reno traffic and less with destination tourism. Austin and Eureka also owe much of their daily visitation to servicing transient visitors from Highway 50.
- Hunting and fishing is probably the largest single component of the destination visitor population. The public lands in the area offer excellent game hunting, particularly Big Horn Sheep, Deer, Antelope and Elk, as well as recreational fishing. Most hunting visitors camp or use RV campsites and access the backcountry by four-wheel drive. Because of service and retail shortages, knowledgeable hunters will stock-up on provisions before arriving in the area.
- A second major category of local overnight visitors involves persons using off-highway vehicles (OHV's). This appears to be a rapidly growing visitor sub market. Visitors are drawn to the large expanse of trails and isolated historic mining artifacts that serve as destinations. Local residents also enjoy off-road activities. Visitors to the area often come as part of a 4-wheel drive club from elsewhere in Nevada or California.
- A third category of overnight visitor involves retirees or "snowbirds" that are often traveling in RV's on longer trips, sometimes during winter when their hometowns are cold. This group often has time to spare and is seeking an attractive campsite with fishing and light recreation.
- A smaller number of visitors are drawn to the area to mountain bike, hike, camp and view petroglyphs or historical buildings. Austin promotes an annual mountain biking event and has developed a series of hiking and biking trails around the community to expand this market. The three gateway communities, Austin, Eureka and Tonopah also report casual visitors who spend a few hours touring the town's, visiting local shops, and eating a meal before proceeding on to their next destination.

- There a small number of professional outfitters in the area who provide support and guide services for campers, hunters and other recreationists.

In sum, the area currently has a small and diverse overnight tourist business mostly oriented toward the area's expansive public lands and historic artifacts. Private services are minimal and only modest efforts have been made to organize and communicate what the area has to offer.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Great Basin & Sky Island Habitats

The planning area lies within the *Great Basin*, a vast, closed basin characterized by rivers and streams that terminate in interior lowlands known as playas (large ephemeral desert lakes) and sinks rather than draining into larger water bodies (*include a Great Basin map*). Located in the rain shadow of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Great Basin represents a temperate desert with snowy winters and hot, dry summers. *Sky Islands*, the parallel mountain ranges that rise out of the desert floor, are unique features of the central Nevada portion of the Great Basin. Sky Islands are defined as mountain top habitats isolated from one another and remarkably different in composition because the dry distances separating them have allowed their biotic communities to evolve in distinct ways.

The following list provides a brief description of the vegetative cover-types and their dominant species found in the planning area (*see Natural Resource Map*):

- *Aspen*: Deciduous forest dominated by Quaking aspen, found in localized areas at higher elevation and cooler aspects.
- *Dry Meadow*: Herbaceous meadow dominated by a diversity of forbs and grasses. Principle grasses include Alpine fescue, Shorthair, Wheatgrass, Needlegrass, Timothy, Hairgrass and/or Spike trisetum. Found throughout the foothills and mountains.
- *Great Basin Subalpine Pine*: Conifer woodland dominated by Limber pine, Bristlecone pine and/or Whitebark pine, found on higher elevation mountains (9,500–11,000 feet).
- *Grassland*: A mixture of seeded perennial grasslands, fire induced annual grasslands and native valley, foothill and mountain grasslands.
- *Mountain Mahogany*: Woodland dominated by Mountain mahogany often occupies a belt above pinyon/juniper woodlands on rocky, dry slopes and outcrops.
- *Mountain Shrub*: Deciduous shrubland dominated by Gambel oak, maple, Mountain mahogany, Bitterbrush, Serviceberry, Currant, Ninebark, Manzanita, Buckbrush. Snowberry, Cliffrose etc., widespread in the foothills and mountains
- *Mountain Sagebrush*: A variety of sagebrush in concert with other shrubs, grasses and forbs found throughout the mountains (6,500-10,000 feet).
- *Pinyon/Juniper*: Conifer woodland co-dominated by Pinyon pine and Juniper, found at low elevations.
- *Playas*: Barren internal basin depressions located on flat, low elevation valley floors.
- *Sagebrush*: A shrubland dominated by sage species found above 5,000 feet, the most widespread and abundant cover-type in Nevada.
- *Salt Desert Scrub*: Shrubland of Shadscale, Desert holly, Greasewood, Desert thorn, Saltbrush, Winterfat, Budsage, Horsebrush, Snakeweed and/or Green Ephedra found below 5,000 feet.
- *Greasewood*: Very salt tolerant shrub found across the flat valley floors.
- *Wet Meadow*: Meadow where soil moisture is abundant throughout the growing season containing Sedges, Rushes, Reedgrass, Timothy, Bluegrass, Hairgrass, Willow herb, and Saxifrage.
- *Wetland*: Low elevation marsh and wetland areas dominated by Cattail, Pondweed and Sedge. Limited distribution found in low elevation basins around permanent water sources.

Wildlife

The following list provides a brief description of some of the predominant and unique species found in the planning area (also noted, in italic, are locations where wildlife are commonly observed):

- *Chuckers*: Non-native, introduced game bird. Widespread on talus slopes throughout the mountains.
- *Desert Big Horn Sheep*: Bighorns that occupy the mountain ranges of central and southern Nevada. They were reintroduced to the area between 1968-1988. (*Peavine Canyon*)
- *Elk & Mule Deer*: Ungulates found in mountains and foothills, often migrating up and down seasonally. (*Elk on Table Mountain - deer common in each range*)
- *Pronghorn Antelope*: Inhabit grasslands and open shrub-grasslands. (*common in each valley*)
- *Sagegrouse*: Located in sagebrush communities.
- *Wild Horses & Burros*: Managed by the USFS and BLM. Herds are distinguished by their coloring and size. (*Little Fish Creek Valley*)

Geology

The geology of the area is very complex and exciting. The Basin and Range landscape is a geologic wonder because it is young and very active. The proliferation of hot springs, young volcanic rock and faults are evidence of activity. *Mountain building* resulting from shifting tectonic plates is ongoing within central Nevada. The ranges are lifting up and pulling apart from one another. Central Nevada is also rich in minerals.

- *Ore Deposits*: Metallic ores (e.g. gold, silver, lead, zinc, tungsten) have been mined throughout the planning area. Gold-silver deposits were mined at most of the bonanza mining camps.
- *Turquoise Mines*: One of the first minerals to be mined (300-500 A.D.), Nevada turquoise mines remain an important source for the southwest Indian turquoise industry. There are several turquoise mines around Austin and the largest suppliers in the area are near Tonopah.
- *Rock Hounding*: Plentiful deposits of interesting rock ranging from colorful agate to petrified wood to black obsidian can be found throughout the planning area.
- *Hot springs*: Water heated by molten rock is forced to the surface resulting in thermal springs and other geothermal features. *Spencer Hot Springs* and several other undeveloped hot springs lie within the planning area.

Paleontology

Unique paleontology discoveries have been made within western reaches of the planning area.

- *Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park*: Established in 1957 to protect and display North America's most abundant concentration of ichthyosaur fossils. About 40 of the prehistoric marine reptiles dating from the Triassic era (200 million years ago) have been discovered in the park. (The park also preserves the historic gold mining town (1896-1911) of Berlin)

CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCE

Mining & Ranching

The state's colorful mining history is evident in the area's historic mining towns and ghost towns. Evidence of prospecting in the planning area dates back to the 1860's and mines remain in operation today. Similarly, livestock grazing and cultivation on the open range of central Nevada began in the 1870's and is ongoing today. Several historic ranches remain in use in the planning area.

- *Ghost towns*: Abandoned towns in varying states of decay with remnants from mining operations as well as day-to-day life. Each town has a cemetery that serves as an important genealogical resource. (*Ellsworth, Berlin, Ophir, Gold Park, Jefferson*)
- *Historic Town*: Mining towns that are still populated. Surviving evidence of mining activity ranges from scattered mud remnants to grand stone ruins and mill sites to intact brick and wood edifices (*Austin, Tonopah, Eureka, Gabbs, Ione, Manhattan, Belmont, Kingston*).

- *Charcoal Ovens*: Built by Italian-Swiss charcoal workers, known as the “carbonari”, to furnish fuel for furnaces at nearby mines. Pinon and Juniper were cut and burned to create the charcoal. Charcoal manufacturing was important business since the fuel kept the Hot Creek and Tybo mines active.
- *Historic Ranches*: Predominantly in private hands. Drive-by viewing reveals the expanse of territory these ranches commanded (*Farrington Ranch in Reese River Valley owned by the USFS*)
- *Modern Mining*: Mining operations, including the world’s largest heap leach gold mine at *Round Mountain*, continue to flourish in the mining tradition that has persevered for nearly 150 years.

Austin

As the center of the Reese River mining district, Austin was once a roaring silver camp. By the 1870’s the boomtown’s population had reached 10,000. Austin retains a historic feel and efforts are ongoing to preserve its historical resources. The town’s historic buildings are marked for self-guided tours including:

- *Stokes Castle* (c.1897): A three-story stone castle built by Anson Stokes, the owner of the narrow gauge railroad that carried ore and supplies between Austin and Battle Mountain.
- *3 Historic Churches*: The Methodist Church (1866), St. Augustine’s Catholic Church (1866), and St. George’s Episcopal Church (1878) are all
- *Other historic features*: the old city hall, county courthouse, cemetery, Gridley Store, Masonic and Odd Fellows Hall, International Hotel, Granite quarry, brick yard, pine nut routes, mining tunnels, early settlers homes, historic commercial structures.

Tonopah

Tonopah’s historic main street is in a state of decay and has been added to the “most endangered list of historic places.” Nonetheless, this once prosperous mining town still clearly manifests a sense of the past. The Mizpah Mine and its namesake, the Mizpah Hotel (1908) are both listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- *Tonopah Mining Park*: Located at the site of the original mining claim (Mizpah Mine) that started the rush to Tonopah making it the “Queen of Silver Camps.” Over 100 acres, the park preserves the rich history and equipment of mining.
- *Tonopah Airport & Nellis Air force Bombing & Gunnery Range*: Jet planes were tested at the airport for World War II and famous pilots and astronauts began their careers on its runways. The test range was home to the stealth bomber during its initial testing phases.
- *Central Nevada Museum*: Numerous displays about the region’s history including artifacts ranging in scale from parts of Manhattan’s stamp mill to crashed aircraft from the military base.

Overland Transportation

A variety of historic overland transportation routes intersect the planning area. While the routes have been adopted by the highway system, evidence of the early means of transportation is still visible.

- *Pony Express/Cold Springs*: Ruins of a horse exchange station for the intrepid riders that carried mail overland between 1860 – 1861.
- *Lincoln Highway*: The first transcontinental auto road crossed the Desatoya mountains at Carroll Summit along Route 722 in the early 20th century (c.1910).
- *Overland Stage Stations*: Many of the North/South valley roads as well as Highway 50 parallel stage coach routes and rock walls and other ruins are evidence of stations where horses, blacksmith service, and wagon repairs were likely available (c.1861-1870).

Prehistoric

Within the planning area there is evidence of association with the day-to-day activities of Native American tribes (Shoshone and Paiute) such as hunting camps and food collecting places. Only a fraction of the prehistoric resources in the area have been examined and many more are likely to be discovered. Of particular

note, are the Shoshone tribe, who have inhabited the area for many thousands of years and continue to live in the area (*Yomba Indian Reservation*).

- *Hickinson Petroglyph Recreation Area*: At this BLM site, petroglyphs are scribed on rock walls dating from the late prehistoric period (c.1500-1860).
- *Toquima Cave*: Designs painted on (pictographs) and carved or scratched into rock surfaces (petroglyphs) in the Toquima Range.
- *Prehistoric Remnants*: Broken pottery, grinding stones, circular storage areas, stone game drives, chip stones, and hearths that are thousands of years old are found throughout the planning area and allow archeologists to begin reconstructing history of the area's earliest inhabitants.

RECREATION RESOURCES & OPPORTUNITIES

Hunting & Fishing

Fall is the busiest season in the planning area. Big game draw many sportsmen and women in search of opportunities to hunt elk, deer, and desert bighorn sheep of amazing quality. All tags are by drawing and application and none are available over the counter. Certain tags are auctioned off with tags for desert bighorns bringing in up to \$50-60,000 each. Bird hunting is also very popular. Three outfitters in the planning area offer guided hunting trips.

Hiking, Biking & Equestrian Uses

Opportunities to travel through the country on horse, foot or bike are numerous with hundreds of miles of trails to choose from.

- *Toiyabe Crest National Recreation Trail*: Trail runs 72 miles along the ridges of the Toiyabe Range at elevations generally above 8,000 feet. A wide range of vegetation and scenery occurs along the trail that crosses the Arc Dome Wilderness.
- *Austin Mountain Biking*: Austin offers the largest concentration of single and two-track bike trails.

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV)

Currently OHV traffic (e.g. ATV's, dirt bikes and 4x4's) is allowed on all routes that are not in wilderness or in designated restricted use areas. OHV use is widespread in areas surrounding the Austin/Tonopah region and is growing quickly within the planning area. Due to poor signage and user education as well as minimal enforcement, OHVs are commonly found in restricted areas.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

A unique aspect of this plan is the intention to integrate the USFS's land management strategies with regional tourism and economic development strategies. This section analyses the region from an economic development perspective and integrates the management of public lands with the development of viable and sustainable tourism economy.

The following steps were undertaken to create the economic development elements of this plan:

- Project team (Shapins Associates & BBC Research and Consulting) toured the planning area and made individual assessments of the area's assets, weaknesses, visitor infrastructure, attractions, recreational qualities and tourism prospects. Interviews were conducted with persons outside of the region who are knowledgeable about rural tourism or persons knowledgeable about the Nevada area to ascertain additional perspectives on Central-Nevada's offerings.

- The Project Team lead a full-day planning workshop in Round Mountain with a broad sampling of local, public and private stakeholders.
- The Project Team conducted its own internal planning session to synthesize findings and analysis.

The core of this analytical process involved an evaluation effort designed to define the area's qualities and issues along with notable market challenges and opportunities (see Qualities & Issues chart). The final plan attempts to capitalize on the area's qualities, particularly when a pronounced local strength is aligned with an external opportunity (e.g. grant opportunity, potential partnership). The plan presents recommendations for overcoming or mitigating the region's economic development issues.

Economic Development Realities

The alignment of strengths with opportunities helps define immediate tourism development positioning. For example, the planning area presents a significantly under utilized recreational asset in a larger region where many other recreational areas are over used and crowded. Similarly, the area's attractions are unknown or unappreciated in a state with significant marketing resources and a policy of promoting rural areas. These represent immediate opportunities.

Conversely, there are other regional challenges where market threats or limitations align with resource weaknesses. For example, the dearth of even basic visitor services makes attracting visitors in a highly competitive market very difficult. Similarly, the area's isolation from major population concentrations also limits marketing options. These qualities represent challenges that can only be addressed over the long term.

Regardless of basic environmental qualities, tourism attraction requires more than market tag lines and attractive landscape. Tourism is a highly competitive business and the Austin Tonopah region has shortcomings that must also be acknowledged and ultimately addressed.

- ❖ **Limited economic development capabilities of the USFS:** The USFS manages much of property (but not all of the sites) that offer the greatest market appeal. BLM also manages a substantial portion of the planning area including some unique landscape. The USFS can manage these properties to accommodate visitors but the USFS is not an economic development agency and it has very limited financial resources. The majority of the strategies outlined in this plan will require participation by other public entities and most importantly actions by private entrepreneurs to develop the full range of visitor services necessary to accommodate a growing tourism business.
- ❖ **Current lack of visitor support infrastructure:** An immediate problem facing the planning area in its efforts to increase tourism and generate economic activity is the lack of basic visitor services. The entire planning area has fewer than 600 hotel rooms, the majority of which are in Tonopah, which cannot serve the entire region. Very few of the current accommodations meet minimum standards expected by modern tourists. Food and restaurant offerings are also minimal as are basic services including visitor information, health care and automobile supplies. As noted above, the USFS cannot unilaterally address these issues, nor can other public entities. This plan must stimulate new businesses as well as the imagination of local entrepreneurs in order to spur development of additional visitor infrastructure.
- ❖ **Modest scale of local tourism market:** This issue is tied to the prior problem of limited services and infrastructure. The area is very large and the current tourism market very small. Even large percentage increases in activity will not produce large dollar returns. Some infrastructure investments cannot be

justified until the scale of the market increases. The implementation plan should by necessity start with small steps.

- ❖ **Absence of visitor information and communications:** Also a problem tied to the absence of visitor infrastructure, is the absence of basic information, signage and communications materials. Somewhere early in the tourism development process, investments will be needed to guide, protect and inform visitors as to the nature and location of services and attractions
- ❖ **Isolation and lack of market awareness:** Although its isolation and lack of exploitation remains part of the region's appeal, it also limits market awareness and willingness to sample the area's offerings. Central Nevada is a long way from major population centers making marketing and communication efforts complicated and expensive. Casual visitors who stop at the gateway communities find the distances involved in exploring the Monitor or Smoky Valleys intimidating. It is difficult to divert travelers under these circumstances.
- ❖ **Narrow appeal of area's attraction:** The core of the region's offerings, desert, isolation, wilderness and remoteness, have fairly narrow market appeal and those same qualities can be found in more traditionally appealing areas such as the Sierra Nevada Mountains. This implies that market strategies should be closely tailored to an appropriate market niche. At this point in the area's development, the Austin/Tonopah region is not a mainstream market attraction.
- ❖ **Absence of regional funding mechanism:** The planning area encompasses three counties and four economically depressed communities. There is no ready source of ongoing marketing and promotion funding. Most communities use sales tax or lodging tax revenues to support tourism development but the area's lack of retail and lodging activity precludes these sources of funds.

These economic development realities are recognized and addressed in the plan and strategies developed in Chapter 5.

Economic Development Opportunities

The Nevada Commission On Tourism (NCOT) is an excellent resource for funding and technical assistance need to implement this plan. The State of Nevada has an aggressive and well-funded tourism program that emphasizes promotion of rural areas. The State's current campaign "Wild Nevada" fits well with the orientation suggested by this plan and the attractions offered by the planning area. NCOT has a web site designed to link to local promotion efforts, which makes leveraging on the State's marketing efforts very inexpensive. The State also supports an annual conference devoted to assisting rural tourism promotions, and it has a grant program to help stimulate new tourism promotion efforts (*See appendix A for additional information on NCOT and the rural grant opportunities*).

QUALITIES & ISSUES

The following chart, compiled from field analysis and a planning workshop with area residents, summarizes the qualities and issues associated with the planning area. The qualities represent special features of the planning area and will inspire promotional materials and inform the development of recreation facility development. The issues correspond to management challenges that the plan needs to address (for additional issues related to economic development realities).

| SUMMARY OF QUALITIES & ISSUES | | |
|--|---|---|
| | QUALITIES | ISSUES |
| <i>Natural Resources</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abundant and healthy wildlife ▪ Diverse vegetation and habitat ▪ Undisturbed environments that reveal natural processes at work ▪ Varied landscape terrain and ever-changing skies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uncontrolled OHV use in USFS and BLM lands degrades and fragments habitat ▪ Unused roads in wilderness areas are not revegetating naturally despite closure signage because of illegal OHV use ▪ New use brings potential deterioration of fragile habitats (e.g. riparian areas) |
| <i>Cultural & Historic Resources</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engaging history & folklore ▪ Authentic character, window into the “real” west ▪ Abundant mining ruins ▪ Numerous prehistoric artifacts and rock art ▪ Native American associations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specific sites (e.g. Charcoal Kilns) are fragile and/or in a state of disrepair and require protection and stabilization work ▪ Insensitive use damages the resources ▪ Fragile and sensitive sites require visitor education and/or a controlled visitor experience to avoid further degradation of the resource ▪ Interpretive information is seldom found at cultural and historic sites ▪ Unattractive fencing at Toquima Caves deters from the visitor experience. |
| <i>Recreational Resources</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities for wilderness and rugged backcountry exploration ▪ Unspoiled, Remote, Peaceful, Vast & Beautiful landscape ▪ Unknown, unexplored terrain ▪ Seasonal variety in scenery and recreation opportunities ▪ Opportunities for wildlife observation and photography ▪ Great horse country ▪ Amazing hunting opportunities and qualified outfitters and guides ▪ Varied OHV terrain ▪ Inexpensive recreation offerings ▪ Uncrowded trails and backcountry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several access roads and trailheads are unsuitable for horse trailers. ▪ Trailheads and campsites are concentrated around wilderness areas and draw day-users and high impact users into wilderness. ▪ Popular camping areas are overcrowded on weekends and holidays ▪ User conflicts occur in areas where OHV, hiking, biking, and equestrian uses are all permitted ▪ Motorized vehicle restrictions are often ignored ▪ Different types of OHV users (ATV's, 4x4's, bikes) require distinct use areas and trails |
| <i>Environmental Education & Interpretation</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited USFS led environmental education in Austin & Tonopah | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very limited interpretation and education programs ▪ Need to cultivate community understanding, appreciation and stewardship for area resources |
| <i>Visitor Services</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Austin & Tonopah ranger stations provide visitor information ▪ Tonopah's Jim Butler Hotel provides friendly service and historical and recreation information. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trip planning resources are very limited ▪ Accommodations, restaurants and general supplies are very limited and oftentimes, below modern day standards. ▪ Insufficient restaurants in Austin to “feed” tour bus groups ▪ Visitors traveling through area feel disoriented and uncomfortable due to lack of signage ▪ Visitors are overwhelmed by the size of the region and are tentative about exploring it by car |

| SUMMARY OF QUALITIES & ISSUES (cont.) | | |
|---|---|--|
| | QUALITIES | ISSUES |
| <i>Marketing & Promotion</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NCOT promotes adventures in rural Nevada ▪ Mountain Sage (a collaboration between Austin and Big Smokey Valley Chambers of Commerce collaboration that promotes the area and provides trip-planning resources including a website and maps). ▪ Internet makes low-cost ▪ Appealing to youth and/or adventuresome recreation market | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The area is generally unknown of among potential tourists ▪ Lack of funding stifles efforts to market the region's recreation opportunities. ▪ Lack of marketing infrastructure to build on ▪ Currently, the area will not appeal to traditional tourists, it is suited for more rugged, adventure-seeking individuals. ▪ Competition throughout the west for similar youth/adventure visitors ▪ Area is isolated |
| <i>Partnerships</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BLM, local residents, business owners and Chambers have expressed interest in the planning effort. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No umbrella organization exists that could coordinate promotion, tourism, and funding efforts. ▪ Outside funding is needed to assist with preservation and restoration of cultural and historic resources ▪ Little coordination of promotion efforts and economic development between Austin and Tonopah. |

Area Stories



CHAPTER 3: AREA STORIES

This chapter builds on the plan's Interpretive/Education goal of *interpreting the key stories and building keener awareness, understanding and appreciation of the area's natural, historic and cultural resources* by outlining interpretive themes. In addition to presenting the planning area's key stories, interpretation and education programming lay an important foundation for the conservation of area resources. By highlighting the planning area's unique cultural, historic and natural features, the USFS and its partners will cultivate a newfound understanding and appreciation among locals and visitors. It is the USFS's hope that this knowledge and dissemination of information will lead to more sensitive use and stewardship while attracting more visitors.

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretive themes are a method of organizing information and focusing interpretive and marketing efforts toward the presentation of key ideas. By capturing the essence of the place and the breadth of the area's stories, the interpretive themes will provide a framework for the development of educational programming as well as inspiration for creative marketing approaches.

The six themes listed below represent the central message of stories, history and opportunities that the USFS and area partners want to relay to visitors. A definitive statement, simple explanation and several sub-themes define each theme. Linked specifically to key resources, the sub-themes further elucidate the area's stories and histories.

1. SETTING

A Vast Mountainous Land Awaits...

Throughout the site, open roads traverse broad desert valleys and parallel striking mountain ranges. Detours from the valley roads and entry into the National Forest provide endless opportunities for backcountry solitude, adventure and self-discovery.

- *Mountains Abound*

Located in the heart of Nevada, the most mountainous state in the lower 48, the site's lonely roads and open basins are bound by dramatic ranges.

- *Land for us All*

Public lands make up the majority of the planning area with over 6 million acres under the ownership of the USFS and BLM. These public lands are open for the public's enjoyment, yet they are also home to many wildlife and plant communities whose habitats must be respected.

- *Away from it All*

Adventurers undaunted by isolation and intrigued by the vast, sparsely populated country will be rewarded with an unrivaled sense of solitude and remarkable scenery.

2. NATURAL RESOURCES

Basin and Range Country

Four parallel ranges divided by broad valleys stretch across the Austin/Tonopah for over one hundred miles creating an expanse of mountain and desert habitat.

- *Sky Islands Rising from the Desert Floor*

The mountain top habitats of the Austin/Tonopah region are remarkably different in composition. Isolated from one another by desert valleys, the natural communities of each mountain range have evolved in distinct ways.

- *Land of Little Water*

The Sierra Nevada Mountains cast a rain shadow over central Nevada and prevent pacific storms from bringing moisture into the basin and range country. Resident wildlife and plant communities of the desert valleys are remarkably adept to the arid climate and harsh conditions.

- *Its Not Just Desert*

Where water is found with canyon creeks and mountain springs, the landscape is transformed with vivid colors and lushness that contrasts sharply with the desert hues. The mountain ranges present a spectrum of plant communities ranging from sage-studded hillsides to alpine wildflowers.

- *Plentiful Wildlife – High in the Mountains, Hidden in the Canyons, & Traversing the Valley Floors*

Robust plant communities support diverse and healthy wildlife populations. Species range from herds of healthy horses in the valleys to sage grouse to bighorn sheep and elk atop the mountains.

- *Eating off the Land*

With trophy-sized game; healthy elk, antelope and deer herds; and plentiful birds, hunting opportunities are numerous. For the angler, trout streams descend through the canyons. The landscape is also filled with edible plants whose uses many Native Americans know best – there are pine nuts to harvest, wild berries to pick and many other plants to discover.

- *Reptiles of the Ancient Seas*

Fossil fields at Ichthyosaur State Park provide evidence that prehistoric marine reptiles inhabited the area over 200 million years ago.

- *Mountain Building in Progress*

The basin and range country is young in geologic terms (dating from the Milocene Era, 200 million years ago) and active as the mountain ranges continue to rise and split apart from one another. Fault scars, hot springs and young volcanic rock are all evidence of the tectonic shifting at work.

- *Gold Nuggets and Silver Seams*

The land harbors rock with veins of rich minerals that have attracted miners of all sorts since the mid-1800's. Lone pocket hunters search for "pockets" of valuable ore, rock hounds scan the landscape for turquoise and other gems, and modern mining operations work through the night to strip gold from the hills.

- *Stewards of the Land*

The diverse habitats and the abundant wildlife they support require conservation and sensitive use. While there is ample evidence of the damage man has inflicted on the landscape, there are also stories of his endeavors to heal and restore natural processes.

3. CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Story of Adaptation

The rugged mountain and desert landscape have tested the ingenuity of the area's inhabitants throughout time. Native Americans, miners and ranchers have all struggled to survive and, wherever possible, prosper off the landscape.

- *A Prehistoric Connection to the Land*

Pictographs, petroglyphs, prehistoric hunting camps and many other cultural artifacts shed light on the lives and traditions of the Paiute and Shoshone tribes.

- *Overland Transportation: Exploration & Early Settlement*

The Nevada country was opened to exploration, settlement and urban civilization by overland transportation routes. Evidence of the Pony Express, stagecoach routes and the Lincoln Highway can be found throughout the site.

- *Working the Open Range*

Ranching and farming in the desert valleys has posed a serious challenge for centuries. Cattle and sheep still roam the open ranges and the advent of modern irrigation supports alfalfa, wheat and barley farming operations.

- *Rushes and Mother Lodes*

Spurred on by the discovery of the Comstock Lode in 1859, prospecting became widespread in central Nevada and miners today continue to "rush" to harvest the area's minerals.

- *Characters of the Real West*

With great spaces between communities, the landscape breeds self-sufficient and gritty characters. The local people and their tales expose the trials and wonders of life in an unspoiled and oftentimes difficult country.

- *Protecting our Legacy*

Remnant prehistoric and historic relics are fragile and these valuable pieces of our past. The resources must be respected and protected so that archeologists will have the opportunity to learn more the area's earliest inhabitants.

4. RECREATION

At Play in the Nevada Wild

Nevada's wild and beautiful landscape provides adventures to suit a wide variety of personal preferences. The spectacular scenery and numerous relics of the area's history are accessible to all who are willing to venture off the main roads. For those in search of backcountry challenges there are peaks to scale, big game to hunt and trails to follow.

- *Defining your Limits*

Humbling to man, the vast backcountry invites exploration and commands the respect of all intrepid travelers. Opportunities for adventure and self-discovery are endless in the remote landscape.

- *Wild Scenery & Wild History*

Throughout the seasons, the landscape provides remarkable wildlife viewing, amazing scenic vistas, peaceful natural excursions and numerous opportunities to explore the area's history and folklore.

5. STEWARDSHIP

Conserving Our Resources

Intent on “*caring for the land and serving people*,” the USFS is working to cultivate partnerships with local communities and other agencies to build awareness of the area’s sensitive resources and foster a stewardship ethic among residents and visitors.

- *Protecting & Restoring the Land*

The USFS is committed to *protecting and restoring the land*. Within the planning area, the USFS has already taken steps to protect the forest’s resources by instituting use restrictions and overseeing designated wilderness areas. The agency will continue to conserve natural and cultural resources for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of the public.

- *Resource Protection through Partnerships*

The USFS needs help to fulfill its mission of protecting and restoring the land. The USFS encourages residents and visitors to volunteer as stewards of the land – to commit to using the resources responsibly, to respect conservation efforts, and to communicate to others about the value of public lands.

6. VIEWS

High Country Panoramas & Starry Nights

Views from the Austin/Tonopah region’s high country seem to stretch to infinity with mountain range layered upon mountain range as far as the eye can see. The views become even more dramatic as night falls and reveals unrivaled stargazing opportunities.

- *Range upon Range*

The open, high alpine landscape affords unrivaled views of the Humbolt-Toiyabe’s layers of mountain ranges that appear as waves to the horizon..

- *Night Skies*

Far removed from sources of light pollution, the sparsely populated area allows for incredibly clear night skies. In addition to stargazing, unusual sightings are oftentimes reported in central Nevada’s night skies.

Recommendations & Strategies



CHAPTER 4: Recommendations & Strategies

This chapter outlines the recommendations supporting the *Recreation and Tourism Framework Plan*. Each recommendation is accompanied by a series of strategies. The strategies outline ambitious, yet practical courses for achieving the project goals.

KEY PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Develop Public/Private Partnerships:** Proactively pursue other public and private interests to initiate tourism development efforts, engage the community in the implementation of this plan and stimulate private sector development of necessary services and accommodations.
- ❖ **Develop a Promotions and Marketing Program:** Initiate a tourism promotion and marketing program, in coordination with other public and private entities, that endorse opportunities for adventure, self discovery, education and solitude while advocating the conservation of natural, cultural and historic resources.
- ❖ **Support Tourist Center & Gateway Development:** Support the development of Austin, Tonopah and Eureka as logical area centers for visitor orientation, educational programming and services.
- ❖ **Protect & Conserve Natural Resources:** Educate and manage visitors in order to minimize visitor impacts to wilderness, wilderness planning areas and other significant natural and cultural resource areas. Promote land stewardship while protecting and restoring sensitive natural resources.
- ❖ **Protect Historic & Cultural Resources:** Work with others to protect historic town sites, including Austin, Tonopah and Eureka, as well as other cultural and historic resources within the planning area. Encourage and facilitate the responsible use and stewardship of these sensitive resources.
- ❖ **Facilitate Area Exploration:** Create a system of signage, tour routes and interpretive facilities that bolster resident and visitors' understanding and appreciation of area resources and improve visitors' comfort level as they travel through the remote landscape.
- ❖ **Organize and Develop Quality Recreation Experiences:** Provide a variety of public recreation experiences and support the development of needed visitor support services and facilities.
- ❖ **Evaluate Progress:** Monitor the successes and failures of this plan and accommodate appropriate midcourse corrections.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The following strategies are intended to guide the USFS managers and area partners as they begin to improve recreation opportunities, attract a greater number of visitors and preserve resources. Shaped by the project vision, the strategies focus on the enjoyment, appreciation and conservation of the area's resources and the endorsement of a sustainable tourism industry. Many of these strategies rely on partnerships between the USFS and a host of area stakeholders. The USFS intends to work closely with local communities, partnering agencies, Chambers of Commerce and other potential partners in order to implement this plan.

Develop Public & Private Partnerships

The USFS needs help in implementing this plan. It is essential that the USFS adopt proactive measures to engage the local communities, stimulate private sector development and induce broader plan ownership and participation.

- **Engage members of the community & work with others to develop a regional tourism board**
 - Recruit diverse participation of business, community and public leaders who can take ownership of the Plan and accept responsibility for implementation.
 - Determine which entities are capable and willing to implement this plan's recommendations and strategies
 - Broaden constituency for the plan and eventually transfer responsibilities for implementation to an appropriate regional entity.
- **Develop a relationship with the Nevada Commission on Tourism (NCOT)**
 - Tie into NCOT's rural Nevada promotional campaigns.
 - Apply for NCOT's rural tourism development grants and technical support.
- **Partner to implement Plan**
 - Identify and solicit public and private interests to serve on a regional tourism development board
 - Conduct a "district needs assessment" and entertain proposals from private entities that are in demand and are consistent with the USFS' niche.
 - Explore permanent funding to ensure at least a three-year effort.
 - Work with communities to secure grants for the preservation and restoration of historic resources, marketing and promotions and ongoing revenue sharing.
 - Partner to facilitate sensitive use of specific heritage areas – support tours led by knowledgeable guides, recruit volunteers stewards.
- **Encourage development of quality visitor services**
 - Work with communities to identify needed visitor services, both public and private.
 - Encourage higher levels of customer service
 - Initiate an annual award for tourism promotion and service development.

Develop a Promotions and Marketing Program

Define the essence of the planning area and an appropriate recreation "niche." The niche represents the role the USFS and adjacent lands owners (e.g. BLM) will play in providing recreation facilities and opportunities for area residents and visitors. Following these initial efforts, the USFS should begin marketing the area's resources in coordination with other public and private entities. Develop promotional materials that highlight the area's opportunities for adventure, self-discovery, education and solitude and convey a stewardship message.

- **Define the recreation "niche for the Austin and Tonopah ranger districts**
 - Target initial markets: the modest level of visitor services demands a tolerant guest and the rugged nature of the outdoor environment suggest a recreation oriented visitor; thus a youth recreation market is an appropriate place to begin.
 - Given the rugged nature and remoteness of the Austin and Tonopah districts, it is likely that the niche will be characterized by opportunities for backcountry adventure and self-discovery that will be facilitated by primitive and dispersed camping facilities and a variety of trails systems and travel routes.
 - Initial recommended market orientation include:
 - Adventure travelers: youth, extreme sports; resort residents of the Tahoe area might be a good start as they meet the target demographic and live in close proximity to the planning area.
 - RV users: organize, improve and advertise campgrounds.

- Outdoor recreationists: appropriate magazines, suppliers
 - Auto tourists: divert persons on regional auto based trip by intercept strategy
 - Identify the qualities of the niche to promote
 - Be prepared to modify the niche as visitation patterns shift
 - Overtime, as communities develop more visitor services and the area is successfully promoted, the district should become more attractive to families and traditional users who enjoy the outdoors. Such a shift in visitation patterns would require the USFS and others in the area to modify the rustic, low amenity character of the niche.
 - Complete additional assessments of central Nevada's recreation needs and opportunities before defining the niche.
- **Establish a place image or brand & develop promotional materials**
 - Utilize and refine marketing themes.
 - Define the area's qualities and attractions.
 - Develop coordinated information materials for information center distribution, and direct mail and internet use. Report recreation opportunities, attractions, USFS programming, outfitter trips and visitor services.
 - Build upon Mountain Sage's promotional effort (a collaboration between Big Smokey Valley and Austin Chambers of Commerce to provide trip planning information and market the region).
 - **Build a website**
 - Develop a Austin and Tonopah ranger district web site
 - Post information about area resources and recreation opportunities
 - Provide links to other outdoor/tourism sites and to information about visitor services
 - Link to other area resources so visitors can assemble a complete picture of what their visit will be like.
 - Provide trip planning resources online - Identify tour routes and desired destinations
 - Identify tips for trip preparation and traveling in a remote area
 - Post contact information for additional trip planning resources (e.g. Chambers, regional tourism board)
 - Support development of a regional tourism website
 - **Recruit community support & services**
 - Sponsor community events/festivals that tie to the resource.
 - Encourage and, where possible, assist with the development of better visitor services.
 - Award and praise existing services that provide interpretive information, link to area resources and provide quality lodging and hospitality (e.g. Jim Butler Motel, Belmont Inn).
 - Catalyze more entrepreneurial activity by building infrastructure (e.g. trails, campgrounds) around existing destinations sites such as Belmont and Manhattan.
 - **Spread the word**
 - Tie into the State's ongoing efforts to promote "Wild Nevada" a youth oriented marketing campaign used to promote rural Nevada.
 - Develop Media/Familiarization tours for outdoor writers and other publicists.
 - Develop a regional distribution plan for marketing materials that tie into the popular tourist destinations (e.g. Las Vegas, Great Basin, Grand Canyon, Lake Tahoe, Mammoth Lakes) as well as tourist hubs (e.g. airports, major cities).
 - Distribute promotional materials locally to Chambers of Commerce, BLM & USFS visitor centers and nearby towns (e.g. Beatty, Fallon, Battle Mountain).

- Ensure that staff from other USFS districts in the Humbolt-Toiyabe and neighboring forests are familiar with the area and have Austin and Tonopah ranger district promotional materials available.
- Apply for State Tourism grants to fund the development of brochures and other promotional materials.
- **Investigate the possibility of developing a research institute**
 - Assess demand for a research center based on the research of the cultural, historic and natural resources of the Austin/Tonopah region.
 - Partner with others to recruit and accommodate artists and researchers whose work ties to the area's resources.
 - Require resident artists/scientist to present their work and/or research locally.
 - Keep all artifacts discovered during any research in the local areas.

Support Tourist Center & Gateway Development

Austin, Tonopah and Eureka are the logical gateways and service centers for tourism support. As information and visitor service centers, Austin, Tonopah and Eureka would serve as starting off points for excursions into the site.

- **Develop visitor information/orientation facilities within the towns**
 - Develop a partnership where the local chamber can help operate tourism information services at existing USFS Ranger Stations.
 - Build information kiosks outside the Austin and Tonopah Ranger Stations that contain maps and information on visitor services, recreation opportunities, attractions, USFS programming and outfitter trips.
 - Sign the ranger stations so they are easy to find from the road and make them welcoming as a trip planning and visitor information resource.
 - Identify a central location in Eureka to display visitor information.
 - Develop the Carver's rest area/pull off to accommodate a kiosk.
 - Partner with Chambers of Commerce, State Tourism and others to construct additional information panels or kiosks in other central locations.
 - Encourage the Tonopah Chamber of Commerce to move to a central downtown location where it is very accessible and visible.
- **Interpret & promote town resources**
 - Tie historic site on USFS land with similar sites within or near the towns.
 - Make visitors aware of similar interpretation opportunities and/or additional historical information in the towns.
 - In partnership with area historians and preservation organizations, develop walking tours through and around the communities that explore the town's history, culture and outlying natural resources.

Protect & Conserve Natural Resources

The designation of specific use areas and the development of new recreation opportunities and facilities would direct day-users away from sensitive and/or pristine natural resource areas (e.g. wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), special regulation areas and riparian zones).

- **Direct higher impact uses outside of sensitive areas**
 - Identify areas sensitive to visitor use, in need of restoration and/or requiring use restrictions.
 - Establish programs and partnerships to inventory and conserve the area's significant cultural and historic resources.

- Encourage use of forest and BLM lands outside of these sensitive areas
- **Adopt conservation measures to protect sensitive and imperiled resources**
 - Institute road closures, boundary enforcement and habitat restoration in wilderness and WSA's.
 - Support the designation of Fandango, Morey, and Antelope WSA's as wilderness areas and, in the interim, manage them to protect their wilderness potential.
 - Identify roads in wilderness, WSA's and restricted areas for closure and revegetation.
 - Develop specific actions for restoring and enhancing riparian communities.
 - Where necessary for the protection of wildlife (e.g. sheep lambing, elk calving, bird migrations), institute seasonal trail/area closures.
 - Pursue partnerships with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and others to protect Austin and Tonopah's historic resources, including Tonopah's main street, as well as other historic structures within the planning area.
 - Develop interpretive signage that encourages sensitive use of historic, cultural and natural resources.
- **Build awareness and appreciation among area residents**
 - Develop local educational outreach programs that include classes, presentations and workshops.
 - Offer workshops at regular intervals on flora, fauna and area history.
 - Work with locals and area historians to develop a series of interpretive resource manuals.
 - Encourage educated community members to inform visitors about area resources.
 - Teach educators about the area's resources and develop an education toolbox that compliments school curriculum.
- **Educate about wilderness conservation & use regulations**
 - Work with others to enforce wilderness and special use area regulations.
 - Develop a resource stewardship campaign to educate locals and visitors about the value and vulnerability of the area's natural resources.
- **Institute an environmental education program**
 - Target middle schools initially (4-8th graders) and expand to younger and high school students over time.
 - Visit classrooms and tailor programs to meet state curriculum science standards.
 - Develop simple curriculum guides for teachers willing to take their students into the National Forest to explore the area's natural resources.
 - Partner with other organizations and groups to expand environmental education programs to cover cultural and historic topics.

Protect Historic & Cultural Resources

Historic and cultural sites within or adjacent to the Austin/Tonopah region would serve as destinations where visitors learn about the area's history and explore the surrounding natural environment. However, the USFS and its partners must ensure that sites promoted to tourists are protected from abuse and degradation.

- **Partner to conserve resources**
 - Prioritize the Hot Creek charcoal kilns and Ophir as "sensitive cultural resource zones"
 - Consider the following measures to create a controlled visitor experience at sensitive sites in order to limit degradation of the resource:
 - Guided tours
 - Weekend volunteer stewards

- Signage and fencing
 - Interpretive exhibits
- Work with communities to secure grants for the documentation, preservation and restoration of historic resources within the historic towns of Austin, Tonopah, Belmont, Manhattan, Kingston, Eureka and Gabbs.
- **Identify desirable destinations & encourage sensitive use**
 - Prioritize Manhattan, Belmont and Ione as historic town destinations – recruit residents of these communities to assist in preserving resources and in providing an interpretive experience.
 - Inventory area ghost towns and other historic sites to determine which should be promoted as destinations.
 - Identify and document unique historic and cultural resources of each destination area.
 - Pursue funding and partnerships to protect, stabilize and interpret cultural and historic structures.
 - Develop an interpretive signs, guided tours and/or other means to facilitate sensitive use.
 - Utilize Passport in Time (PIT) and Heritage Expeditions (HE) programs to help with resource analysis and environmental education.
- **Interpret significant resource**
 - Include interpretive information about historic/cultural sites in USFS promotional materials.
 - Create interpretive sign panels and other interpretive facilities and materials to explain resources on site.
- **Develop recreation facilities around the sites**
 - Connect Manhattan and Belmont via a network of bike/hike trails.
 - Develop campgrounds in the Manhattan/Belmont area.
 - Establish hiking areas adjacent to other cultural/historic resource sites.

Facilitate Area Exploration

Trip planning, visitor orientation and educational programming would begin in the main historic towns of Austin, Tonopah and Eureka. From these towns, signage and an auto tour route system would provide direction and interpretive opportunities for visitors setting out to explore the area.

- **Designate auto tour routes**
 - Vary routes by distance, scenery, road condition, amount of visitor services and the diversity of interpretive opportunities.
 - Maintain tour routes to insure the roads are accessible for high clearance vehicles except for select 4x4 corridors.
 - Provide clearly marked rugged routes accessible to 4x4 vehicles only that spur off high clearance routes and present a backcountry experience.
- **Prioritize development of a directional signage plan**
 - Ensure that roads along designated tour routes are clearly marked (e.g. mileage, key sites).
 - Use roadside signage to announce recreation opportunities (e.g. 4x4 route, fishing) and facilities (e.g. campground)
 - Partner with BLM and communities to develop directional signage throughout the planning area.
 - At all trailheads adjacent to or in close proximity to the wilderness boundary, provide signage announcing wilderness regulations.

- **Develop interpretive & recreation facilities along tour routes**
 - Prioritize a spectrum of resources along the tour routes for interpretation. Ensure a diversity of cultural, historic and natural interpretive opportunities are available.
 - Pursue partnerships and funding to research and record area history, folklore and ecology.
 - Develop trailheads and designate use areas that intersect with tour routes and are outside of wilderness and other sensitive natural areas.
- **Foster appreciation and stewardship through interpretive programming**
 - Design a variety of interpretive and educational programs that appeal to diverse user groups and allow for the exploration of the area's varied resources.
 - Include messages about stewardship and responsible use in interpretive programming.

Develop Quality Recreation Experiences

The USFS can show its commitment to the Plan by improving camping facilities and access, expanding existing facilities and constructing some new facilities in order to provide a variety of recreation experiences throughout the planning area. Partner with local communities and other agencies and organizations to support the development services needed to accommodate tourists.

- **Identify facilities needed to fulfill USFS' niche**
 - Prioritize facility improvements and construction additions based on the niche
 - Expand specific trailhead and campgrounds to better accommodate outfitters and equestrian users and to avoid overcrowding.
 - Expand on area's mountain biking resources developing a diversity of single-track trails for a variety of user levels.
- **Targeted facility upgrades**
 - Work with SHPO and other to convert the Kingston guard station into a bunkhouse suitable for overnight accommodations.
 - Identify mechanisms and/or partners to restore and run the Kingston bunkhouse
 - Discourage illegal OHV use in wilderness areas by posting regulations, reducing trail width to single track and enforcing restrictions.
 - Discourage illegal OHV use of the Toiyabe National Recreation Trail by reducing trail width to single track wherever it intersects with roads and posting regulations.
 - Utilize the National Recreation Reservation System for area campgrounds and the Kingston guard station.
- **Inventory non-system routes**
 - Identify which disturbed corridors would make appropriate travel routes for motorized, non-motorized and mechanized uses.
- **Sensitive new facility development**
 - Position new facilities to direct visitors away from wilderness areas and encourage day-use exploration of other areas of the USFS and BLM lands.
 - Develop a hosted campground outside Toquima Cave and provide regular guided tours of the cave.
- **Support growth of towns a recreation center by developing recreation areas in close proximity to the communities**
 - Develop multi-use recreation areas adjacent to Austin, Eureka and Tonopah.
 - Segregate hike, bike and equestrian use areas from OHV use areas.
 - Locate use areas in proximity to the tour routes and the primary town centers.
 - Provide interpretive facilities and educational programs near town centers.

- **Partner with the BLM to designate OHV use areas**

- Designate specific areas on USFS and BLM land for OHV use.
- Utilize towns as staging areas for OHV use
- Accommodate a variety of OHV users by developing day use areas, ½ day areas and touring corridors for overnight trips.

Evaluate Progress

Develop a system for measuring the USFS success in implementing the goals and strategies outlined in this plan. Where appropriate modify recommendations and develop new ones in order to meet the needs of visitors, USFS partners and the resource itself.

- **Begin developing baseline visitor data**

- Document number of visitors at Ranger district stations
- Develop use surveys to gauge visitor satisfaction and visitor and local knowledge of the resource
- Determine whether visitors correspond with the niche adopted by the USFS
- Confer with partners and the umbrella organization to define desired data and questions they feel area important to ask

- **Measure impacts of increased visitation on resource**

- Identify key resources that may be vulnerable to use and measure impacts over time.
- Develop strategies to address adverse impacts from increased use.
- Identify areas where increased visitor education is necessary.

Site Exploration



CHAPTER 5: SITE EXPLORATION

This chapter explains in greater detail the recreation and interpretive facilities recommended in the implementation strategies. The descriptions of the auto tour routes, interpretive programming and facility development are intended to provide a more in depth understanding of what the visitor experience would be like once this plan is implemented and the goals achieved. The specific routes, facilities and sites mentioned below correspond with the *Master Plan* map.

AUTO TOUR ROUTES

The designated tour routes would follow existing roads, travel through a variety of landscape types and pass a number of cultural and/or historic sites. The routes are directly tied to the interpretive themes and were designed to present a diversity of experiences. Each route travels through the valleys and mountains, passes cultural, historic and natural heritage sites and presents opportunities to learn about unique places and stories. The routes also provide access to trailheads where visitors can detour off the road and explore the planning area by foot, bike, horse and/or OHV. Unless otherwise noted, the routes are accessible to high clearance, 2-wheel drive vehicles.

The routes described below are broken down into segments, since it is likely that visitors would chose to travel only a portion of the route and/or to link different segments. The route descriptions are followed by a summary of the resources the visitor would likely encounter.

Drives from Tonopah

- Travel northwest along Rt. 427 through BLM land and broad desert valleys to the Ione Valley and Berlin Ichthyosaur State Park.
- Continue north to Ione, eastward across the Shoshone Range, and return south to Rt. 427 via the Reese River Valley.
- Head to the east, cross the Big Smoky valley and enter Manhattan (a side trip to Peavine Canyon is also a recommended).
- Continue east to Belmont.
- Cross the Monitor Range (Barley Creek Road) head south through the Stone Cabin Valley (Rte. 900) and return to Tonopah (Rte. 162 to 139 to Rte. 6).

Alternative Routes:

a. An Eastern Extension: Head north rather than south at the junction off Rte. 139 & 162 and traverse east along the forest's southern boundary (Rte. 800), turn south onto Hot Creek Road and return to Tonopah via Rte. 6.

b. 4-Wheel Drive: Take Rte. 6 over Eagle Pass to Rte. 800. At the intersection of Rte. 800 and Rte. 804 go north to Rte. 812 over Sixteen Mile Summit to Route 824 and back to Route 804 to return south to Tonopah or north to Eureka (*route is 4-wheel drive vehicles only*).

Route Experience

a. Landscape/Natural Resource: Desert Valleys (salt desert scrub, sagebrush) with sporadic agricultural operations; Rolling Pinyon/Juniper forests; Riparian corridors Mountain top shrubs and grasslands. Views of open valleys and mountain ranges.

b. Cultural Resources: Ghost town and Paleontological museum (Berlin, Ichthyosaur S.P.); Historic mining towns (Ione, Belmont, Manhattan); Historic Farrington Ranch (*a potential* attraction in the

Reese River Valley); Historic mining structures, water diversion systems and ranch (Peavine Canyon); Charcoal kilns (Hot Creek Valley); Extraterrestrial Highway (Rte. 375).

c. Feeling: Solitary desert and mountain drives; Very remote in the Hot Creek Valley; Sense of the past; Contact with visitors and rangers at Ichthyosaur State Park; Interaction with locals in towns; Impressive views from mountain passes; Empty and open roads.

d. Facilities/Services: Trailheads, campgrounds and interpretation; Access to designated OHV areas east of Tonopah; B&B's, campgrounds and bar/restaurant/snack food, limited supplies (Manhattan, Belmont, and Ione)

Drives from Austin & Eureka:

- West from Eureka to Dickinson petroglyph site along the Pony Express and Stage Routes (Highway 50) to Austin.
- East from Austin along Highway 50 to Rte. 100 to Spencer Hot Springs to Pete's Canyon and Toquima Cave.
- Across Monitor Valley through White Sage and Rye Grass canyons to Route 25 north along Antelope Valley Rd. to Eureka.
- South from Austin along Rte. 2 through Kingston Canyon to Kingston
- Across the Big Smokey Valley and over Northumberland Pass (Rte. 8) to Rt. 82.
- West from Austin along Highway 50 to Highway 722 and east across the northern tip of the Shoshone to the Reese River Valley.

Route Experience

- a. Landscape/Natural Resources:* Desert Valleys (salt desert scrub, sagebrush) with sporadic agricultural operations (Reese River Valley); Rolling pinyon/juniper forests; Mountain top shrubs and grassland; Spencer Hot Springs; Wild horse herds (Big Smoky Valley); Wetlands/Riparian areas and lake (Kingston Canyon); Impressive views from mountain passes (Northumberland, Bob Scott & Pete's Summit)
- b. Cultural Resources:* Pony Express, Stage Routes and Lincoln Highway; Dickinson petroglyphs; Toquima Cave; Historic mining town (Kingston), Mining ruins and reclamation (Northumberland)
- c. Feeling:* Solitary experience through diverse landscape; Enclosed within canyons open through valleys; Minimal contact with others at well-used campgrounds (Kingston, Toquima);
- d. Facilities/Services:* Trailheads, Toiyabe National Recreation Trail, campgrounds (hosted campground at Toquima), Kingston guard station (w/ overnight accommodations), interpretation; Guided tour of Toquima cave; Access to designated OHV areas; Visitor services limited to main towns (Austin, Eureka).

Central Routes (4x4 only, can link to the Austin and Tonopah routes):

- Head northeast from Gabbs to Ellsworth across the Paradise Mountains
- Cross the Ione valley to Ione, continue east across the Shoshone Mountains, across the Reese River Valley and over Ophir Pass to Ophir.
- Head south to the town of Carvers or east across Big Smoky Valley over Charnock Pass to the Monitor Valley
- Travel northeast across the Monitor Valley and pass over Dobbin Summit (Rte. 138) to Big Fish Valley and return north to Eureka or Austin or South to Tonopah.

Route Experience

- a. *Landscape/Natural Resources:* Spectacular views from several mountain passes (Ophir, Charnock and Dobbin Summits); Desert Valleys (salt desert scrub, sagebrush); Big Fish Valley lakes (seasonal bird migrations)
- b. *Cultural Resources:* Ghost towns (Ellsworth, Ophir); Historic mining town (Ione)
- c. *Feeling:* Rugged roads over mountain passes; Solitary, A backcountry experience; Challenging navigation.
- d. *Facilities/Services:* Trailheads and interpretation; Wilderness access; Bar/restaurant/snack food and other supplies limited to Gabbs, Carvers and Ione; Lodging in Carvers.

FACILITIES

Listed below is a summary of the recreation facilities that would be improved including upgraded facilities and the development of interpretation facilities at specific sites. Also noted are the areas where new facilities would be constructed.

Facility Improvements

- *Campgrounds*
 - Expand Peavine campground
 - Expand Bob Scott to accommodate more campers and to include a trail system and night programming.
- *Trailheads (expanded to better accommodate horse trailers)*
 - Mosquito Creek
 - North and South Twin
 - Washington Creek
 - Kingston

New Facility Development

- *New Trailheads*
 - Within Bob Scott campground
 - Northumberland pass trailhead
 - Western slope of Toquima Range
 - Rye Grass Canyon
 - Western Slope of Monitor Range
 - Dobbin Summit
 - 2 – in Hot Creek Range near forest boundary
- *New Campgrounds and Accommodations*
 - Toquima Cave campground (hosted)
 - Outside Belmont
 - Primitive site between Belmont and Manhattan
 - 2 sites in the Hot Creek Range near forest boundary.
 - Convert Kingston guard station to an overnight bunk house
 - Identify other USFS structures for conversion to backcountry accommodations

- *New Interpretive Sites*
 - Primary Interpretive Centers: Austin, Tonopah & Eureka
 - Historic Towns: Ione, Manhattan, Belmont, Gabbs, Grantsville, Kingston
 - Ghost Towns: Ellsworth, Ophir, Gold Park, Jefferson, Tybo
 - Pony Express and historic Stage Routes along Highway 50
 - Historic Lincoln Highway along Highway 722.
 - Explore possibility of using/interpreting the Farrington Ranch
 - Mining reclamation in Birch Creek and Northumberland
 - Guided tours at Toquima Caves
 - Charcoal Kilns (in Hot Creek Range)
 - Auto tour routes and promotional materials will also provide opportunities for interpreting the area's natural resources (e.g. geology, ecology, biology, wildlife)

USE AREAS

The strategies called for the development of a number of use areas that cater to a variety of user groups. Listed below are the types and locations of use areas that would be designated within the USFS ranger districts and the outlying BLM lands. The designated use areas were created to take day-use pressure away from the wilderness areas and provide for unique backcountry experiences.

Surrounding Main Interpretation Centers (Austin, Tonopah, Eureka)

- *Self-Guided Touring Area*
 - Opportunities to walk through town and understand its historic resources
 - Natural trails in landscape outlying towns
 - Interpretive trails exploring the area's history, culture and natural resources and accompanied by a trail map/brochure available at the ranger stations and other information outlets.
- *Multiuse Recreation Area*
 - Hike, bike and equestrian use areas
 - Multiple trails with varying levels of difficulty
- *OHV Areas (developed in partnership with BLM)*
 - Trail and roads for ATV's and other OHV's
 - Day use areas
 - Destination use areas in the Desatoya Mountains (west of Austin), in the southern monitor range/Stone Cabin Valley (east of Tonopah), and in the northern Toiyabe range (north of Austin)
 - Touring routes connecting Austin with Battle Mountain

Within Forest Interior

- *Multiuse Recreation Area at Belmont & Manhattan*
 - Variety of trails (hiking, biking, equestrian) connecting the towns
 - Trails leading from the historic towns into the forest
- *Hiking Only Area (provide for day use or overnight trips)*
 - Trail system between Ione and Berlin/Ichthyosaur
 - Trail network between Pete's Summit, Northumberland and Charnock Passes.
 - Trails between Rye Grass Canyon and Dobbin Pass

First Steps



CHAPTER 6: FIRST STEPS

In an effort to expedite the implementation of this plan and provide a clear outline of how to initiate the processes of promotion and marketing, cultivating partnerships, economic development and sensitive resource management, this Chapter lists the priority actions that the USFS should adopt and encourage. While this list represents a phasing and responsibilities guideline, the USFS and its partners should remain flexible and adapt to meet unforeseen opportunities and challenges as they arise.

The “first steps” are divided into two categories – *Short-to-Mid Term Actions* and *Long Term Actions*. Actions crucial to spearheading the promotion of the area and conserving vulnerable resources should be addressed within the early years of the plan’s implementation. Throughout the life of the plan (15-20 yrs), the USFS and partners should adopt and recruit support for the long term economic development, recreation upgrades and conservation measures.

SHORT-TO-MID TERM ACTIONS

Promote the Plan Internally

- Present the plan within USFS to ensure policy acceptance and an implicit commitment to supporting the Plan.

Promote the Plan Externally

- Recruit participation from BLM.
- Present the plan within local communities to interested individuals and business owners
- Find local champions that will support and help implement the Plan.
- Present the plan to NCOT and conferences and workshops related to rural tourism development in the Nevada.

Potential Partners: BLM, Workshop participants, Chambers of Commerce, community leaders, business owners, outfitters

Form an Umbrella Organization to Oversee Plan Implementation

- Invite BLM, Chambers, interested individuals, business owners, NCOT representatives and other stakeholders to form an organization to oversee the plan’s implementation.
- Ensure that a diversity of groups, agencies and individuals are represented
- Seek permanent funding.

Potential Partners: BLM, Chambers of Commerce, community leaders, business owners, NCOT

Develop a Strong Relationship with the Nevada Commission on Tourism (NCOT) and other Potential Grant Sources

- Investigate how to dovetail with NCOT’s adventure advertising campaign, what grants are available, and how to secure the grant funding.
- Apply for NCOT and other grants.
- Research other funding sources.
- Send representatives to NCOT’s annual rural planning seminars.
- Work with NCOT to organize additional FAM tours and magazine articles.

Potential Partners: NCOT, other foundations and grant sources

Agree on the Niche and Develop a Brand

- Review niche defined in the plan and refine it as needed.
- Develop a brand and identity for the planning area based on the niche.

Develop Integrated Communications Materials (Website/Direct Mail/Print handouts)

- Confirm niche markets and strategies.
- Partner to develop trip planning information – attractions, maps, resource descriptions, recreation opportunities; materials suitable for Web, brochures and direct mail distribution.
- Partner to develop Web site link to NCOT’s “Bring it On” Travel Nevada website; build upon existing Mountain Sage efforts.
- Provide link to Chambers or other sources of information on local visitor services (e.g. restaurants, accommodations).
- Link to other outdoor travel websites (e.g. GORP, Sierra Club).

Potential Partners: BLM, Chambers of Commerce, NCOT, Mountain Sage

Invest In Improved USFS Services

- USFS can demonstrate its commitment to this Plan, and a commitment to the proposed partnership with the gateway centers by making investments of its own to help accommodate tourists and improve overnight accommodations.
- Inventory campsite and develop strategies for physical improvements: access, signage services, improving the quality of campgrounds.
- Work with others to improve regional signage, way-finding and resource education. This should include tying regional signage program to USFS campground and access designations.
- Develop, improve or expand trail systems and/or campgrounds as necessary to accommodate niche market.
- Improve access to the USFS lands and BLM outside of designated wilderness and wilderness planning areas.
- Tie Federal investment in improvements to similar commitments from area communities and services (e.g. campgrounds at Belmont, trails linking Manhattan and Belmont).

Potential Partners: BLM, Chambers of Commerce, NCOT, SHPO, business owners

Develop Gateway Centers and Arm them with Informational Material

- Partner district ranger stations with local Chambers of Commerce in Austin and Tonopah.
- Make USFS and BLM stations more user-friendly as a trip planning resources.
- Develop kiosk system for gateway centers (Austin, Tonopah and Eureka) as well as the centrally located Carvers area.

Potential Partners: Chambers of Commerce, BLM

Develop a Directional Signage System

- Sign tour routes, attractions and facilities to assist visitors with way finding.
- Coordinate printed informational materials and signage (e.g. sign designated tour routes)

- Recruit volunteers and local interest groups to monitor and maintain roadside signage (e.g. “Adopt a route”).

Potential Partners: BLM, volunteers, local interest groups

Conserve Sensitive Resource Areas

- Identify natural areas and cultural sites in most need of protection.
- Develop measures that ensure sensitive use of special resource areas (e.g. Charcoal kilns, Ophir).
- Sign and enforce road closures and use restrictions.
- Promote a stewardship ethic through signage, printed materials, and education.

*Potential Partners: SHPO, BLM, **Passports in Time (PIT)** and **Heritage Expeditions (HE)***

Interpret Area’s Key Natural, Historical and Cultural Resources

- Develop educational programs for visitors and locals.
- Educate local school children and teachers.
- Provide interpretive signage at key resources throughout the planning area.

Potential Partners: USFS, BLM, local experts on area resources, PIT and HE, school districts, universities

LONG TERM ACTIONS

Encourage communities to create Economic Development strategies with incentives for private sector investment in historic and cultural attractions & visitor services

- Identify historic and cultural structures and sites for stabilization, restoration, or re-use.
- Maintain a list of needed visitor services.
- Encourage communities to obtain assistance from SHPO.

Potential Partners: Chambers of Commerce, business owners, local residents, SHPO, community leaders

Support Successes/Monitor and Adjust

- Develop an annual award for entrepreneurship related to tourism development.
- Award businesses in the area that provide high quality customer service.
- Support area businesses and encourage new business ventures.
- Develop intercept and Web based follow-up survey for use out of visitor centers.
- Reevaluate Plan and adjust every few years.

Potential Partners: Chambers of Commerce, BLM, business owners

Appendices & Maps



Appendix A

The State of Nevada has an aggressive well-funded State tourism promotion program managed by the Nevada Commission on Tourism. This organization is the best prospect for financial support for new Austin/Tonopah region promotion efforts and offers a marketing platform that can leverage local efforts. The National Park Service also offers technical assistance to rural areas seeking to develop conservation based tourism plans. Both programs are described below.

Nevada Commission on Tourism

The Nevada Commission on Tourism (NCOT) was created in 1983 to develop and implement national and international marketing campaigns and promote Nevada tourism. Additionally, NCOT is charged with educating the travel and tourism industry outside and within the state; working with the travel and editorial media; assisting local and regional rural-based destination marketing organizations in developing promotional campaigns; and providing technical assistance, programs, and events through grant funding.

NCOT has two divisions: Tourism and Publications.

- *The Tourism Division* works to expand domestic and international markets and attract more visitors to Nevada for longer stays. These goals are accomplished by enhancing Nevada's competitive position in airline service, and tour, convention, leisure, and business organizations; developing informational and educational programs for the tourism business community; promoting the state's scenic wonders, outdoor recreation, and cultural and historic sites, events, and attractions; and encouraging public awareness and appreciation for Nevada's natural and cultural heritage.
- *The Publications Division* publishes *Nevada Magazine*, *Nevada Travel Update*, and the *Calendar of Nevada Events & Shows*. These publications are intended to educate and inform visitors and residents about Nevada's scenic wonders, outdoor recreation, cultural and historic attractions, activities, and events.

Although Las Vegas and related attractions dominate Nevada tourism markets, the state is committed to expanding tourism opportunities in rural areas. For promotional purposes, the State is divided into five tourism "territories" each with a separate theme and focus. The subject area falls in two territories: the Pony Express and Cowboy country. An incentive-based \$1 million 3-year marketing campaign was started in January 2001 designed to draw out-of-state RV visitors to rural Nevada with a contest that will award a \$100,000 motor home as first prize each year. The contest is designed to spotlight Nevada's attractions in addition to gaming.

The NCOT media relations program promotes Nevada through news releases, color slides, videos, numerous interviews, media familiarization tours, the Press Room section of the Web site; a low-budget monthly digest of travel news, and Nevada Travel Roundup, which goes to about 2,000 travel writers and news reporters/editors.

NCOT also produces an annual Rural Roundup conference to provide learning and information for tourism and convention-oriented individuals in Nevada's rural communities. This 1.5-day conference assists in developing hands-on marketing and management skills for tourism industry representatives in rural communities. The conference facilitates the sharing of information and develops stronger communication and cooperation.

Rural Grants Program

NCOT's Rural Grants Program distributed \$1.0 million among all of Nevada's six tourism "territories" in FY 2002-2003, supporting over 200 tourism-promoting programs and projects that have little or no other source of funding. Many of Nevada's rural communities depend heavily on the Rural Grants Program to promote annual festivals, events and attractions that provide significant revenue. This financial support has helped programs such as the Elko Cowboy Poetry Gathering, Fallon Air Show, Native American Pow-Wows, Walker Lake Loon Festival, Austin's Rock & Gem Show, and Ely's Railroad Festival, Laughlin River Days, and the Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival to become successful. Both Austin and Tonopah have been recipients of NCOT rural grants.

Rural grant recipients typically provide matching funds, volunteer work and in-kind services. Grants are awarded annually in each of Nevada's six tourism "territories:" Cowboy Country, Indian, Las Vegas, Pioneer, Pony Express and Reno-Tahoe. Funded projects include attending travel industry trade shows to promote area attractions and events, purchasing promotional materials, advertising, maps and brochures, maintaining Web sites, creating videos and DVDs, obtaining professional services to develop tourism.

Among the grants is \$10,000 to the Tonopah Chamber of Commerce to create The Tonopah Star Trail and pursue a niche market, stargazing. The innovative idea would capitalize on sparsely populated Tonopah's extraordinary darkness that enables nighttime sky viewers to see stars not easily visible in more populous lighted areas.

Other locally awarded grants include:

- \$30,000 to hire a marketing consultant to assess ways to increase tourism in Yerington, Hawthorne, Tonopah, Goldfield, Amargosa Valley, Pahrump, Caliente, Pioche, Alamo, and Round Mountain, including Carvers and Hadley
- \$3,500 to the Central Nevada Mountain Bike Association to advertise and promote Austin as a Nevada "biking capital" whose location on "The Loneliest Highway in America," U.S. 50, makes it an ideal site for bicycle racing events.

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (National Park Service)

The National Park Service through its National Center for Recreation and Conservation offers an assistance program intended to help build partnerships, assess resources, develop concept plans, engage public participation, and identify potential sources of funding. The Rivers, Trails and Conservation program (RTC) provides assistance in collaboration with nonprofit organizations to further local conservation initiatives. Although Rivers & Trails does not provide financial assistance, it does offer technical assistance to community partners to help them achieve their goals. Project partners may be non-profit organizations, community groups, tribes or tribal governments, and local or State government agencies. Assistance is for one year and may be renewed for a second year if warranted.

National Park Service regional offices evaluates applications for Rivers & Trails assistance based on the following criteria:

- 1) A clear anticipated outcome leading to on-the-ground success;
- 2) Commitment, cooperation, and cost-sharing by interested public agencies and non-profit organizations;
- 3) Opportunity for significant public involvement;

4) Protection of significant natural and/or cultural resources and enhancement of outdoor recreational opportunities; and

5) Consistency with the National Park Service mission & goals

The Central Nevada Recreation Partnership has received assistance to develop an interconnected system of trails throughout central Nye County.